UC SANTA BARBARA

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Community Building

It’s all about community.

That’s a large part of what attracts people to study at UC Santa Barbara, a friendly campus with a close-knit student population and familial feel. And it’s a big reason why the university’s Events Center was packed Saturday with some 3,500 happy, screaming students, dancing their feet off to the sounds of indie rockers Grouplove during the 2nd annual spring kickoff event, “The Warmup.”

That so many opted for the Gauchos-only concert rather than the unsanctioned Deltopia street party known to attract outsiders is the latest evidence of success for a campuswide, collaborative effort being driven by students themselves: To shift their culture away from so-called “party weekends” such as Deltopia and Halloween, and prioritize, embrace and respect their community above all.

“The whole idea behind these events is that it’s up to us,” said fourth-year UCSB student Chrystal Anderson, commissioner of the Associated Students Program Board, the force behind “The Warmup” and its fall-held counterpart, “Delirium.”

“It’s our duty to create the change in the culture that we want to see as students,” added Anderson, a communications major who will graduate in June. “And it’s genuine when it comes from students who step up and say, ‘We want to change this.’ The party culture that is, or was, I’d like to say, is something that we took ownership of after things started happening that we didn’t feel were really reflective of how we like to have fun. It was up to us to change that, and the opportunity to

host these concerts was really big for us. There are different ways to have fun. We gave students an alternative and I think that's what they were looking for."

The idea for both "The Warmup" and "Delirium" sprung, in some ways, from the tumult that erupted during Deltopia in April 2014, and from the tragic violence in Isla Vista that followed that May. From grief and frustration was borne a renewed sense of community and a resolve to safeguard and grow that spirit. Then and now, it's been UCSB students leading the charge.

Besides The Warmup's Saturday night concert, which is building a reputation for featuring a big-name act at a tiny ticket price ($5), students also were central to UCSB's offering of myriad other on-campus events throughout the first weekend in April. For the past two years, similar efforts have also been undertaken around Halloween.

"Coming off the tragedy students were deeply affected," said Katya Armistead, UCSB's dean of student life. "And how important the role of the students has been in helping to now change the culture in Isla Vista and on campus cannot be overstated. Students are taking more pride in their campus and respecting their community. And that couldn't have happened without the hard work of students themselves — especially the A.S. Program Board, which has created the most resounding, biggest impact with these concerts."

"Our students are are all about community, and our campus really set out to create opportunities for that," Armistead continued. "Students just want to recreate together, to be together. Having the vision to engage the students to help us move our campus along in being healthier around these big events is huge, because it's the students who make the biggest difference. 'What do you want, students? Where do you want change?' And let them come up with the ideas. It's the students who have to create the change, and they have. It's pretty exciting."

The students agree. Anderson attested to that change, saying that her peer community today feels calmer, more aware, more responsible and better bonded than ever before.

"Students are really engaged and really want to participate in this change," Anderson said of her fellow Gauchos. "That's so important. We couldn't do it without their participation, and we couldn't be as successful without them. We are not just bystanders. We are active agents in how we party and how we want to be

perceived.”

Alex Levine has some ideas about that.

As the A.S. Program Board’s special events coordinator, Levine has been a key player, with Anderson, in Delirium and The Warmup, among other events, booking artists, setting dates, managing production requirements and logistics, coordinating with security, law enforcement, the fire marshal and more.

It’s stressful, tough work, she said, but it’s well worth it for this aspiring music industry professional, who hopes the efforts ultimately help remake the idea of “party weekends” at UCSB.

“These events have brought our community together a lot, and being Gauchos-only, people take so much pride in that,” said Levine, a fourth-year film and media studies major. “Students now expect these shows to happen, knowing we bring these cool artists and wondering who we’re going to have — and now that’s becoming part of the culture. I hope UCSB keeps this tradition going for years to come. Wouldn’t it be cool if these big ‘party weekends’ in the future became known for these big concerts, not for big parties?

“Partying doesn’t have to mean what a lot of people think it means,” Levine added. “It’s just about being with all your friends and having a good time. What better than a $5 concert?”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.